

IN THE CYCLING WORLD.

THE LESSENING COST OF ASPHALT PAVEMENTS.

AT LAST A DECISION TO IMPROVE FIFTH-AVE.—CHARGES FOR TRANSPORTING WHEELS IN ENGLAND—TROUBLE WITH BAGGAGE—MEN HERE—A FINE PATH OUT ON LONG ISLAND.

An important factor in the extension of the system of asphalt streets in this city is the lessening cost of laying them. In his last annual report, Water Purveyor E. P. North estimated the expense at the rate of \$4 a square yard. Recent bids for placing the material on old block pavements, with a fifteen-year guarantee, are at an average of \$278 per square yard. Two years ago the figure was \$340. The difference between a \$4 and a \$278 basis means a good many square yards in a \$1,000,000 appropriation. Furthermore, an improvement in the pavements themselves is noticeable, due to the greater skill of the workmen acquired by experience. It is to be expected that the methods will be bettered even more, and reductions in the cost are likely to continue. New York is spending so much on its streets, and bids fair to spend much more in the next few years, that the paving companies can look forward to an increasing business. This means the purchase of the raw material in bigger quantities and the introduction of various economies incident to doing business on a large scale.

It may seem strange to readers of The Tribune who have noted the prices paid by Brooklyn for asphalt paving that the figures on this side of the East River are so much higher. Over there, there have been extraordinary reductions in the bids, until the average per square yard now approximates \$1. Of course, the heavier traffic in New York, compelling frequent renewals, would justify a certain difference, but not so great a one as exists. The explanation of the Department of Public Works is that in Brooklyn the price provided for little but the material and the laying, while here the contractors merely cover the old stone pavements; here the blocks are taken up, the street is regraded and regulated, the stones are relaid, and then comes the asphalt. The Brooklyn plan adds the extra cost of the height of the street. In New York, sufficient earth is removed to retain the former level. Of course, the extra care gives a better pavement.

The element of guarantee is important; in New York, it is the custom to bond the contractor to keep the pavement in repair for fifteen years. This means that he will have to do his entire work at least twice, in addition to the repairs. Over the Bridge there is no such long guarantee. The so-called assessment asphalt laying in this city is cheaper, but the contractor is not so efficient of those engaged in the business, and his experts can give no cause for the defect. Perhaps there is some unexplained peculiarity about the raw material, or the action of the city. The work was done, of course, the city is protected by the terms of the contract.

Mr. North, as the chief municipal expert on the subject of pavements, contends that smooth streets are not only agreeable, but financially profitable. He points out that the size of loads hauled about the streets has greatly increased in recent years. Thus, coal was commonly carried in ton loads, on trucks weighing half a ton, until asphalt streets became common. Now, whole loads of coal are carried on a single truck. Whole loads of sugar on a three-horse truck, if the load is to be drawn over good pavements. If its destination is to be reached in part by a route which is to be drawn over the worst pavements. With sugar, however, it is often possible to lay out a route which will permit three horses to haul nine tons.

It may seem odd that Mr. North should not favor a broad-trail ordinance for this city, but he does not. In his view, the city ought to provide such pavements that merchants can transport their wares at the cheapest possible rate, and in the most advantageous way. Asphalt has shown itself well adapted to bear the heaviest weights. In one instance, a cable spool, weighing seven tons, was carried through the streets without injury to the asphalt. Although the wheels were broken. Much lighter loads would crush the old stone pavements to a depth of three or four inches.

It has seemed a hopeless struggle to get the roads of Central Park and Riverside Drive in winter condition this summer. The ravages of winter on them had not been effaced when heavy spring rains were away new little gullies. Repairs have been made from time to time, but they have done not much more than to keep the roads from the destroying effect of the storms. It is explained that the material of the roads has been ground so fine that it makes a perfectly solid mass, impervious to water. The drainage is all by way of the surface. The water, however, is in the position of being in an ideal road of broken stone or gravel the rain in part sinks through the roadway. At the entrance to the Park recently constructed at One-hundred-and-sixth-st., and only slightly, although the grade is considerable. Of course, the repairing is simply a question of money. In one of the Paris parks, as much as \$5 or \$10 a square yard is spent for cleaning and maintenance. With any such sum, it would be easy enough to have the Central Park drives as smooth as a board all summer.

The sale is being pushed of a saddle pad which has been found by some people to dispose of the whole saddle question, although it is unwise for one man to judge of the value of such a device from the experience of another. The pad is simply of felt, covered with pigskin, and is made of two lobes, which can be laced as closely together as is wished. It is fastened with strong thong, which should be firmly laced across the bottom of the saddle. One form of the pad is merely fastened around the saddle, but this is more likely to be torn off than the other. The pad may be made to order, and should be wide rather than long.

English cyclists are having the same trouble as those in many States over here about the transportation of their machines. Only they do not seem to share the views of riders of New York State about the injustice of paying any sum for excess baggage on a bicycle. If they do, they do not make it clear, for the agitation is chiefly directed against excessive charges and unfair regulations. The railway companies all exact a fee, 74 disavow all responsibility for damage, even if due to the utter negligence of their employees. As no special accommodations are provided for bicycles, they are often heaped on top of one another in as careless a fashion as if they were sacks of meal, and frequent injuries result. Reductions in the charges have been made, and there is no serious criticism of them. A person who still rides a tricycle, however, is vastly indignant because he or she had to pay four shillings for the carriage of it for a distance of thirty-three miles. The fare was only two shillings and sixpence, and the fee for a bicycle was one shilling. The tricycle is so clumsy that it is almost impossible to get it on a train. The English railway companies should discriminate against it. The rider is that anybody should ride one of the monstrous contrivances on a train. The rider is "safety." Yet they are still to be seen in England, being ridden largely by women and clergy-men.

A rider who "kept tab" on himself for twenty miles last Sunday came to the conclusion, as the result of his experience, that wheelmen often go much faster than they suppose. "I wasn't trying to make a record, or to do my best, or anything of

that kind," he said. "In fact, the things that I abhor in riding are records, century runs and all other things that tend to exhaust or needlessly weary people on the wheel. Last Sunday afternoon I had about thirty miles to do, and it was my not very definitely formed intention to do it in about three hours. I could do that without special effort, I knew, because for the greater part of the way I should be on nearly level macadam. The first seven miles, or a little more, however, were over country roads, through a somewhat rolling country, and near the beginning was a hill more than half a mile long, with a pretty good grade. I had gone up that hill once before, but then I walked. I expected to walk part of the way this time, but, finding that I could ride it, I stuck to the saddle all the way to the top. It was not a very prudent thing to do, especially as I had got up from the table only about half an hour before. But it did me no harm, though I was pretty well winded when I reached the level road. It is a road considerably used by wheelmen, and I was able to strike out a good gallop. On three or four little hills before I arrived at the macadam I had to slow down considerably. When my cyclistometer had reeled off ten miles I looked at my watch, and found that just fifty-two minutes had elapsed since I started. At that moment a few large drops of rain began to fall, and I took refuge from the threatened shower under a convenient piazza. The rain was not so bad as I had feared, and in about ten minutes I was on my way again. At the end of the next ten miles I found that it had taken me forty-nine minutes; so that I had done the twenty miles in 101 minutes. That is a gallop of twelve miles an hour. It seems to me that it was pretty good for a middle-aged man, especially as more than a third of the distance was over ordinary country roads. Bear in mind, please, that I put the North River Bridge in view of this experience, it seems to me that I could easily ride a dozen or sixteen miles an hour on a good macadamized road without in any way overdoing it, and I believe that most riders often attain a much higher speed than they are aware of."

Have you ever tried to pass a drunken man who was walking on a sidewalk or narrow road edge in front of you? If you have, you will probably be extra cautious the next time you overtake such an obstacle. Politely refrain from ringing their bell when on a sidewalk and pedestrians are in front of them; they slow up and request the privilege of the passing, and acknowledge the favor with a kindly "Thank you." On a road edge, however, it seems all right to give a warning with the bell. That is what a certain rider did a few days ago when he found a man obstructing his way. The man heard the bell and swung himself out of the way. Just as the wheelman passed, however, he gave a lurch and nearly swung back against the bicycle, at the same time uttering some remark that was not intelligible to the rider. The cyclist congratulated himself on his narrow escape from a bad spill, and resolved to give pedestrians of uncertain proclivities a little wider berth in the future.

Everybody familiar with cross-country riding knows what a road edge is, and knows, too, that in many places the roads would be impassable, or nearly so, if it were not for a hard strip a few inches wide on one side or the other. On roads where many bicycles pass such a strip may be followed for miles, crossing and recrossing the road, as circumstances suggest. Now, there are drivers of horses who seem to take peculiar delight in getting their vehicles and teams on the hard road edge. Some of them may carelessly give no thought to the matter; others, from pure malice, seem to do their best to cut up the extemporized cycle path, and make it rough and uneven. They can get their fine work in best just after a rain. There are some roads not far from New York that are so bad that the cyclist is obliged to dismount and walk, or, if he is a bold rider, to dismount and walk. The imprints of wagon wheels on a road edge are bad enough, but the shoes of horses do more to make wheeling uncomfortable. These muddy horse shoes seem to think that the bicyclist has no rights worthy of respect.

The cycle path through the woods between Bridgehampton and Easthampton, Long Island, is a delight to every rider who passes that way and is lucky enough to find it. For three miles or thereabout the road here is sandy, and the wheelmen of the two towns have opened a path on the left-hand side going east. It begins soon after leaving Bridgehampton, and winds in the most charming way among the trees. At one place a causeway has been built across a swampy place, and a bridge over a little brook. The number of the trees have been cut away so as to clear a path for a horseback rider to get through. The ground has been hard enough with a few inches of snow, but the path is now a smooth outlay. This year all the woods in that neighborhood were burned when forest fires prevailed on the eastern part of Long Island, but instead of looking dreary, the region is now a triflingly more beautiful. The trees have been cut away, and the ground is now a smooth outlay. 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